

## Testimony Concerning Bill 6322

Daniel Lupariello, RPh., Lupe's Drug Store #2 Bridgeport Ct. Owner Manager

To the members of the Human Services, Insurance and Real Estate Committee, and Public Health Committee:

My name is Dan Lupariello, 55 Applewood Dr., Shelton Ct. 06484. My dad, Frank, opened Lupe's Drug Store in Bridgeport in 1945. We have served the North End Community of Bridgeport for over 65 Years and both my dad and myself have been active in community service. Our family business has been one that is totally dedicated for these 65 years to helping all the people of the North End

I must go on record today to tell you how much I oppose Raised Bill 6322. For many years, I and many other independent pharmacists have worked with the Medicaid system in suggesting ways of cutting costs. For the most part, pharmacists have been hit yearly with decreases in reimbursements. The largest hit occurred in 2009 when we were whacked with over a 3% cutback in AWP. This was very unfair, but something we were forced to live with or close our pharmacies.

Let me share some things about my independent pharmacy and how it helps the CT community. Over the last few years, I have suffered, as have many of my colleagues in pharmacy. My RX volume has decreased year after year, but I continue to keep all my employees. I am proud of that and have 16 employees (all Ct residents and tax payers) on my payroll. I have not laid anyone off, even though mandatory mail order programs are running rampant in the state and day after day we see RX's being filled at "out of state mail order facilities" costing everyone in the state. We need to keep jobs here and help the little businesses create jobs. In my 37 years as a pharmacist, I have never seen anything like this winter. My clientele (which has been whittled away by mail order) is now primarily Medicaid and Medicare patients. NEVER in our 65 years have we charged a fee to deliver. This elderly population is what I worry about each day. Even in this horrific winter, I kept delivery vehicles (at least 3) on the road daily. I made certain that this elderly population got their meds during all the snowy and icy days. I am very proud of this and feel a dedication to the elderly. But let us be honest! How long can I serve them for free at a \$2.90 fee being paid to me on each Medicaid Rx. Let's be reasonable! We need a fair reimbursement for our Rx's and Bill 6322 does not guarantee that. There is a population that is being cared for by the independent pharmacies- the invalids and elderly who rely on the delivery service of the independents. I know, at this reduced rate, that I probably could no longer service that community or I would have to start charging for the delivery service. Would the chains care for these people? Would the chains deliver to these people? Or it is suggested that clients use "out of state mail order." How is this for Ct? Let us all take a step back. Must the burden of the state's budget issue fall directly on the small businesses and independent pharmacist?? Let us help DSS find ways to save as I, and many other independents, have offered and done in the past. We can continue to show how to save money. Bill 6322 is not a fair answer.

Let me end with just a couple more things. My pharmacy is a "for profit" business. By making a profit, I get to continue in business and offer employment to my workers who pay taxes and live and spend in this state. This is a good thing!! This IS what small business is all about! I am proud of my business and proud of my employees and they are ALL dedicated to the health of our customers. 7 of 16 of my employees have been with me for 7 years or longer and 7 for over 3 years. It is ironic that, last week, I thought it would be a good idea to hire one the local boys in the neighborhood as a part- time driver. He has not had a job for a while and has been collecting unemployment checks. He was happy to get a job that had the potential to be a full- time job. It looks like I was a week too quick. If bill 6322 passes, his job does not have a chance!

Thank you for listening to me and, in conclusion, let me say it is not always about saving a few dollars. We should be passing bills in the legislature helping the small businesses of the state. After all, we are the BACKBONE of the state!

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